

# BMHA Newsletter



BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA

Volume 9, Number 1

Jan/Feb/Mar 1998

## NOTEPAD

### Things are Looking Up!

You'll notice that as of this issue we have added eight new members, which is twice what we added in the October issue. While this will not quite make up for loss through normal attrition, it sure is a good sign that you members are out there promoting BMHA. Keep up the good work!

### Major Ink Soon for BMHA

In a past issue I mentioned that *CQ-VHF* magazine wanted to put together an article on BMHA and bicycle-mobile operation. Bill Sharp, W8HI, and Skip LaFetra, AA6WK, have written special pieces for this effort, and publication is scheduled for early spring. You'll find *CQ-VHF* in many ham radio stores. Look for it! In addition, we have word that the ARRL will this spring be sending out BMHA info through press releases to selected magazines and newspapers.

### Schartz Misses 400 Miles by a Whisker

New member Larry Schwartz, WB9DBI, of Wylie, Texas has ridden 397 miles in 24 hours (and might still have the callouses to prove it!) I've asked him to write us some comments about that long day. His story just came in by E-mail. It's a good one. We'll run it in the next issue, along with a study of all our members' "most miles in a day".

### Bill Paul, KD6JUI, has Big Piece in Worldradio.

The November '97 issue of *Worldradio* has an exciting two-pager by Bil, the main topic being how ham radio came to the aid of a sick bike tour member. (Alas, no mention of BMHA in the article, just when we need all the publicity we can get to keep a healthy growth in our membership numbers. Probably some mean old editor cut out the part about BMHA.)

### BMHA's New Approach

For years we've run BMHA ads in *Adventure Cycling* and LAB's *BicycleUSA*, two magazines that reach our type of biker. While these ads in the past have brought in many new members, lately they don't "pull" like they used to—responses and requests for info have trailed off quite sharply. As a result, we've decided to cut back our ad space in these biking mags.

Taking a new approach, BMHA has signed up for a series of classified ads in both *QST* and *Worldradio*, which, as you know, are two of the most important ham magazines. Look for our ads starting February 1998. We hope this will bring in new BMHA members. Your comments would be appreciated, as to the style and contents of these ads.

—Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor

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EVER SINCE I GOT INTO THIS BICYCLE MOBILE THING, I CAN'T SEEM TO PULL THE HILLS LIKE I USED TO

This cartoon, by America's favorite ham cartoonist, was sent to us by the man himself, Bob Beasley, K6BJH.

Looks like the guy on the left is about to say "You idiot! Why don't you check out the new mobile rigs, the new light-weight miniaturized rigs? On the bright side....with all that weight on your bike, you must go downhill like a bat out of hell!"

## Alaska Highway Bicycle Tour-'98

(For full details on this bike tour—35 days, Fairbanks to British Columbia—see page 3, Oct. issue, *BMHA Newsletter*.)

Here's a late bulletin from the tour leaders:

"Our dates are now set. Participants will meet in Fairbanks June 3, 1998. Our bicycle trip will end on July 2 at Mile 0 in Dawson Creek B.C. We will arrive back in Vancouver on July 4, 1998.

Costs will be as follows—perhaps less, but not more:

1. Bicycle portion of trip-----\$1374.00 Cdn.
2. Air from Seattle to Fairbanks----\$415.00 Cdn.
3. Bus from Dawson Creek to Prince George-----\$44.00 Cdn.
4. Train from Prince George to Vancouver-----\$167.00 Cdn.

All bikes will be transported from Dawson Creek to Vancouver in our sawwagon. We shuttle tour members from Vancouver to Seattle. We would try to find billets for members who wish to leave with the group for Seattle from Vancouver. If you wish to join this tour, contact us ASAP."

73,

Chuck Dick, VE7MHA, and Lynn Dick, VE7MGK,  
3244 West 38th Avenue Phone: 604 261 5092

Vancouver, BC

Canada V6N 2X6

Web Site: <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cccts/> Fax: (604)433-7710

# EVENTS

## ***MICHIGANDER VI is Unexpectedly Rugged***

Most of us biking hams participate in bicycle tours because we love to ride; we carry our radios to keep in touch and if we happen on an accident or mechanical breakdown we report it. Usually it is pretty routine. Occasionally we get to demonstrate that hams are more than just something David Letterman hands out to his audience.

But what do hams do when the inexperience of the tour directors, the wrath of mother nature, a misguided route surveyor, and just plain bad luck, result in an inordinate number of injuries, accidents, mechanical breakdowns, and low morale? This is the story of such a ride and how the hams rose to the occasion. Last July's Michigander VI, a mostly off-pavement tour, offered many chances for hams to use their communicating skills.

Injuries suffered by riders on the Michigander VI included two broken elbows, uncountable "blown knees", and in the words of Detroit *Free Press* reporter Eric Sharp "enough skin peeled off in falls to wallpaper a small room". There was also at least one very serious accident, which resulted in a fractured skull, collapsed lung, and broken bones. The victim is making a slow but complete recovery. (For Ken's complete report on how hams handled communications for this near-fatal accident see the next issue of the *BMHA Newsletter*. -Ed.) A female rider suffered an aneurism, but there is no evidence of any tour-related cause. She was making a good recovery when the trip ended. One rider had the misfortune to suffer injuries in a fall, coupled with the good fortune to fall directly in front of a fellow rider who was an emergency room doctor with a cell-phone. More than 50 riders dropped out.

The Michigander is actually two rides. The weekend riders started in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Saturday, stayed overnight in South Haven, and returned to Kalamazoo the following day. The six-day tour started in South Haven on Sunday. Tour riders could make it a seven-day event by starting in Kalamazoo with the weekend ride. The previous five tours had gone east to Lake Huron by various routes. This year's tour started on July 19 and went approximately 325 miles north to Traverse City.

In the past, the event has been a fun time for participants, attracting families, many senior citizens and a considerable number of singles looking to meet new like-minded friends. Evenings are spent camped on school grounds and interesting and varied entertainment is provided. The tour is sponsored by the Michigan Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Detroit *Free Press* newspaper and is intended to showcase rail-trails. Surfaces vary from superb hard surfaced trails to gravel roads, from very good back roads to unimproved rail right-of-way. A mountain or cross bike is essential.

This year's tour started with about 850 pedalers and one 14-year-old dog, who rode in a basket on her 79-year-old master's bike. Ages ranged from a few under-twelves, who slipped in, to a few over 80 years. The brochure map indicated four sixty-mile days, a thirty-mile day and a 55-mile day. This was in line with previous rides on mostly easy terrain. For pre-ride training the participant handbook recommended a one-hour

ride four days a week for at least the three weeks prior to the ride.

In actuality, the first day was 70 miles (not a trifling distance on a mountain bike, under ideal conditions) followed by a torturous 75-mile day that included driving rain, rough and sandy roads and an unimproved rail-bed full of potholes and other hazards. The route was also much hillier than previous tours. All of this caused some riders to spend 11 hours or more in the saddle on the long distance days. Needless to say, the recommended training was totally inadequate.



Photo by Krie McDonald

*Trish Martinez proves it's sometimes best to walk through sand---but sand is nice to land in.*

What do hams do when a northbound tour starts to "go south"? The pre-ride briefing for the bike-mobile and other hams had been short and simple. Introductions were made, the repeater frequencies were in the map book and we should try to start at staggered times. It was soon apparent that more was needed. Craig Martin, N8VIP, the net controller, monitored two repeaters, one near the start for the day and one near the end. He would leave the start behind the riders and rove the route in his van.

Karen Mann, KC8EKM, the volunteer staff paramedic, would follow the bulk of the riders, in her car, from sag stop to sag stop. Kevin Ratcliff\*, KB9MQU, would accompany "Dr. Dan", the bicycling paramedic, to be his voice and ears. Art McCleer, KC8Z, would ride in his usual position as sweep. This meant that he often didn't get in until after dark. Karen Jacobi, KC8DNG, after completing her duties as sag driver, looked after Art and saw that he got food and water, since the sag stops were often shut down by the time he went by. Donald Stahlbaum\*, KC8HVQ, looked after the safety of the riders by directing traffic at busy intersections, etc. and did whatever else needed to be done. Donna Stahlbaum, KC8DPP kept busy as a sagwagon driver.

The other nine or so bicycle mobile hams, including Katy Ratcliff\*, KB9QVK, and Ken Ratcliff\*, KB9MQT, more carefully staggered their starts and checked in with a staff member, and with net control, at each sag stop. The intention was to stay at the sag stop to provide communication until the next ham arrived, but this proved impractical because it put the riding hams too far behind schedule, so they stayed until the

incoming hams radioed that they were only a few miles out. This still resulted in some very late arrivals at camp, occasional cold meals, and tents being pitched in semi-darkness.

The many injuries were due, at least in part, to stress and fatigue. The situation would have been worse without the hams, who worked long and hard to report accidents and injuries, call for mechanical assistance, provide increased safety and on and on. Credit should also be given to the many medical professionals who just happened to be on the ride, as well as the two staff paramedics and other volunteer staff members, who also went the extra mile to help out in a difficult situation.

Overall the ride was a positive experience for those prepared for the distances. If you would like to read about the positive experiences of one group, check out this web page: <http://www.eaglequest.com/~martinep/mich6pg.htm>

The Michigander staff have learned from their mistakes! Next year's route has been decided—south and east from Cadillac to north of Ann Arbor, and the distances have been shortened considerably. You can be sure that every effort will be made to make up for this year's shortcomings. My family and I plan to be there and we expect to have a great time.

In the next issue I'll write in detail about the one serious accident.

*\*=BMHA member*

—Ken Ratcliff\*, KB9MQT

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Bloomington, IN 47401-2828

## Q and A

*(Q and A is a new feature. Send your questions to POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306, or E-mail to [hartleyal@aol.com](mailto:hartleyal@aol.com). Our board of experienced bike-mobes will try to provide helpful answers.)*

**Q:** Marlon Weiss, KB9BGP, e-mails: Please tell me what ham radios my wife and I need for bike-to-bike communication. I keep losing my wife on bike rides.

**A:** You'll both need to buy an HT—a handheld transceiver for the 2-meter band. To get a good idea of the latest HT's and other ham equipment, make phone calls to the these leading ham stores and ask for their mail order catalogs.

Ham Radio Outlet.....	1-800-444-9476
Texas Towers.....	1-800-272-3467
R&L Electronics.....	1-800-221-7735
Amateur Electronic Supply...	1-800-558-0411
Jun's Electronics.....	1-800-882-1343
MFJ Enterprises, Inc.....	1-800-647-1800

You will find that many of the catalogs will not list prices on some of the items they sell. This is standard in the industry. They want you to call them, on their 800 numbers of course, and have them tell you the price. Do that—there's no obligation to buy. Call all of them, and you'll find out who has the lowest price.

Antennas for the 2-meter band: At first you can just use the rubber duck antenna that comes with the HT. I say this because I know that your area of Lincoln, NE, has some very

strong ham repeaters. (I used a Lincoln repeater on my 2,000-mile solo bike trip.) Later on you might want a more ambitious antenna—more later.

To get the latest info on new ham gear for bicycle use, I phoned my friend John Thompson, N5EHP, who works at Ham Radio Outlet's Denver store. (HRO has 12 stores coast to coast.) John says that in his opinion the best all-around HT for bike use is the ICOM T-22A. The smallest, and lightest in weight, is the Yaesu FT-10R, which is especially water-resistant and has a loud audio. New HT's run about \$250 to \$300. If you have any questions after you look at the catalogs, give John a call on the 800 line. He's knowledgeable, helpful, and friendly.

As for antennas that are more efficient and give you a bigger range, look in the newsletter. We have antenna articles in many of our newsletters. In particular, look at Bill Sharp's, W8HI, article on the Larsen half-wave NMO-150 in the Jan. '97 issue.

Let me know if you have further questions. I'm at [hartleyal@aol.com](mailto:hartleyal@aol.com).

—Hartley Alley, NA0A

**Q:** Walt Breville, KB0ZLZ, asks: How do those hams on RAGBRAI and GOBA operate on those long tours and keep from running out of battery power? I have a Yaesu FT-50R, which boasts 5 watts, but it's only good for about a half-hour from fully charged till the batteries give out. How can I solve this problem?

**A:** You should certainly get more than a half hour from a fully charged battery. With normal usage it should last for at least eight hours. Check your manual for the "save" battery feature.

There are several ways to cut down on battery drain in an HT. Perhaps the most important is to have an efficient antenna on your bike. This allows you to reach more repeaters using only low power, rather than 5 watts. For an example of an efficient antenna, see pages 3-5 of the January '97 BMHA Newsletter, the article that deals with GOBA's use of the Larsen NMO-150 half-wave antenna. And of course there are many more good antennas for bike-mobile use, many of them homebrew.

Keeping batteries charged is sometimes a problem, especially when you're on the road, and thus away from a 110 outlet. Many hams solve this problem by using AA batteries instead of the nicad battery that comes with your HT.

I looked in the Amateur Electronic Supply catalog (to get one, call 1-800-558-0411) and Yaesu lists an FBA-15 AA battery holder, \$23, that is designed to fit your FT-50R. I've been using a similar one of these for years. These holders use six AA batteries. I find that they last as long as the regular nicad. When they are dead you just throw them away and put in another six. (Note: probably you won't be able to run more than four watts when you use AA's.)

The big advantage is that you don't have to find a 110 outlet—and, more important on a bike trip, where every ounce counts, you don't have to carry a charger, and you just need to carry six AA's for a spare. And if you run out of AA's you just stop at a 7-11 type store (anywhere in the world!) and pick up a fresh supply of batteries.

I buy a 12-pack of Rayovac AA alkalines for \$4.99 at Target. Compare that with the \$60 you might pay for an extra nicad battery. If you MUST have a long-lasting nicad ask your ham store to special-order a FNB-V47 battery. My dealer tells me that this is a special battery made for commercial radios, and that it's the longest lasting he can find.

—Hartley Alley, NA0A

# HOME BREW

## Making a Bicycle-Powered Ham Radio Station

A part of being a ham radio operator is using your own ingenuity to solve a problem. I have put a few miles on my bike this year when the weather was nice. Unfortunately projects around the house kept me busier than I wanted to be. My solution to get more miles in, was to convert my Mag-Trainer to a bicycle-powered ham radio station.

I had an old alternator, battery, bike, and Mag-Trainer. All I had to do was figure out how to put it together. It was a fun project. A lot of cyclists probably have Mag-Trainers and this makes a great Field Day station. I would be very glad to help anyone interested in building a bicycle-powered ham station. There are many ways to build one, but I made one out of stuff I already had.



Steve's bike-powered ham station has 10-meter rig, 2-meter HT, and monitor, mounted in front of his bike.

### What I Already Had

- 1985 Model Schwinn Le Tour Luxe 18 speed touring bike with 27x1-1/8 tires
- Schwinn Micro Speed-Works Mag-Trainer
- 12-volt automotive battery
- Delco alternator (with internal voltage regulator) from an early 80's GM car
- Serpentine belt pulley (flat belt) from a newer GM car
- Project Box (for the monitor) of unknown origin
- 2-meter handy-talkie
- 10-meter mobile radio
- Grommets, bolts, etc.

### What I Bought

- Plastic battery box -- BUY THIS FIRST!!!
- Automotive voltmeter/Automotive ammeter
- Lots of wire terminals and wire
- 2 Turnbuckles

- 3 sections of 3/8 all-thread (Redi-Rod)
- Split-loom (to protect wire)
- Toggle switch
- Molded connector for alternator

### The Battery

I just used an old 12-volt battery that was still good. The FIRST thing you buy is a plastic box for it, because charging batteries produce explosive gasses. The battery must be fully charged before you start because you need 12 volts to excite the fields in the alternator to generate current.

### The Alternator

What I used was a Delco alternator from an early 80's GM car. This alternator has an internal voltage regulator. The original pulley on it was a V-belt pulley. Because the drive mechanism is the rear tire of the bicycle, it needs a flat pulley. I had a serpentine belt pulley (flat belt type) from a newer GM car and I simply swapped pulleys. This alternator has both a wide and a narrow mounting flange. I used the side that allowed me the easiest line-up with the rear tire when the bike was mounted in the Mag-Trainer.

At this point it gets too long and complicated for an article in the newsletter. However, if you want to put this all together, send me a SASE to my address below and I'll be happy to send you the wiring diagram along with the instructions for the alternator connections, the drive mechanism, and the monitor (the project box).

### The Gearing

You need LOW gearing. This you cannot escape. I ride this in my lowest gear (23 gear inches). IF I do not ride in this gear I will blow out my knees. When the fields in the alternator are excited, the drag on your bike is incredible. A high speed is needed to excite the fields in the alternator. You need to shift to a high gear till you feel the drag and see the light go out on the monitor. Now with a LOAD on, shift down to your lowest gear. This is somewhat hard on your drivetrain but with practice you can do this without damaging your gears, derailleurs, or knees. The workout you get with this is incredible, you can not slow down at all. If you do, the fields in the alternator will lose their excitement, and you'll have to start all over again. If you have a computer on your bike that has cadence -- use it! At 23 gear inches I have to maintain a 70 RPM cadence, or start all over again.

### Comments

Have I made many HF contacts on this? Not really. The fun was building it, and now riding it. When I'm not pedaling my bicycle-powered ham station I talk on its 10-meter or 2-meter rigs. When I'm pedaling my station I listen to music on my Walkman. The music helps me maintain my cadence, which is necessary if I'm not to lose the field excitement in the alternator. To sum it up, I have an excellent emergency power source (with the fully-charged battery) to power my radio and scanner for RACES/ARES work.

If you want a free copy of the complete instructions and the wiring diagram, please send a SASE to me.

—Steve Purvogel, KB7YCJ  
218 Seattle Blvd. So. Apt B  
Pacific WA 98047

## REMINDERS

### BMHA Net....on 20

TIME: 2000 UTC and four hours later at 0000 UTC.

DATE: 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

FREQ: 14.253 -- plus or minus the QRM.

Look for me, NF0N, at those times, and if I'm unable to call the net please look for those who have picked up the net when I've been out of town. In particular, look for Assistant Net Controls Jim Kortge, NUSN, and John Liebenrood, K7RO. Jim covers the East, John covers the West, and I cover the middle.

—Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, BMHA Net Control

316 E. 32nd St., S. Sioux City, NE 68776

### For Sale

Do you have bicycle-mobile-related radio equipment for sale? Send in a description and we'll run it. Limit of 20 words, plus your name, address, phone. For members only.

### Back Issues Still Available

You may purchase any of the twenty nine back issues of the BMHA NewsLetter for \$1.50 each, postpaid. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306-4009, and ask for the Index of Back Issues. This service available to members only.

### Your Bicycle Flies For Free!

As a member of BMHA you get free transport of your bicycle, when you fly on Northwest Airlines. You save \$90 on a roundtrip flight. For details call Wild World of Travel, Missoula MT, 1-800-735-7109. Mention that you're a network member of Adventure Cycling.

If you tell us your bike tour plans we'll publish them in the NewsLetter and help make it possible for you to meet fellow BMMHAcers in person or on radio as you pedal along. Just send in your route and the dates.

When you write a plug for BMHA (and please do!) in your local club's newsletter, be sure to include this information:

"The annual dues is \$10. To receive a sample copy of the BMHA Newsletter and other bike-mobile info send an SASE to BMHA, Box 4009-RC, Boulder CO 80306." This will save our club a lot of trouble and expense. The info will be sent next day.

Here's a quick, slick way to tell potential members about

BMHA: have them connect with our website at:

<http://www.ragbrai.org/bmha/bmha.html>.

## NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to add these names to our Membership List:

Raymond V Bishop, KOJFR, 210 Madison Av, Andover KS 67002  
D.N.Demon, K4DND, Rt 1 Burnley Sta, Barboursville VA 22923  
Jerry Fielding, VA3EMS, 1382 Pelissier, Windsor ONT, N8X 1M5  
James L. Holler, KB9PGQ, 3381 Lakeside Dr, Jasper IN 47546  
Brian Meadowcroft, KF4FRP, 15 Lewis Ct, Palmyra VA 22963  
Pat Newton, KJ7MZ, 2667 W. Midwest, Taylorsville UT 84118  
Larry Schwartz, WB3DBI, 12 Los Alamos Cir, Wylie TX 75098  
Roger Storm, KC8ICS, 13815 Riker Rd, Chelsea MI 48118

*With traditional ham friendliness, make contact with these new members, welcome them to BMHA, and help them with any problems they might have.*

## BMHA NEWSLETTER

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We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork — anything pertaining to bicycling while operating an amateur radio, or vice versa.

The BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Assoc., League of American Bicyclists (LAB), and Worldradio.

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Web site: [www.ragbrai.org/bmha/bmha.html](http://www.ragbrai.org/bmha/bmha.html)



## ABOUT BMHA

### For the information of our first-time readers

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a 'Stray' in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile", signed by Hartley Alley, NA0A. Twenty five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played to a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our seven subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is firmly established as a 'regular' at this world-renowned event.

This is the thirtieth issue of our quarterly newsletter, which has become the clearing house for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles. Since the last issue of this newsletter we have added 8 new members. The total membership now stands at 453, with members in 43 states, and six countries. BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Association, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB), and Worldradio.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory, packet and E-mail address lists, bi-weekly net on 20 meters, annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention and other regional meetings, and of course through the BMHA NewsLetter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. Membership application blank on the next to last page.

# EMERGENCY!

## Ham Radio helps Cyclist

### In Remote Sierra Nevada Area

Liz Burke, a 60-year-old bicycle touring enthusiast from Santa Barbara, CA, was known to us as "Ironlegs". Despite the 40 to 50 pounds of gear on her bike, the former tennis pro was usually the first out of a campground in the morning and a leader on the highway. So, we were mystified when she lay her bike down on the dirt road and said she couldn't go further. She was too tired to walk and complained of abdominal pains.

(Liz was a member of our group of seven cyclists on an eight-day 350-mile ride along a segment of the rugged Pacific Crest Bicycle Trail, which runs from Canada to Mexico.)

Ruth and I stayed with Liz while the others kept riding up the road. We had thought that we might take turns walking her bike up the road for her, but her inability to walk prevented that idea.

The day before, Wayne (W9AE, of BMHA) had been talking with Charles Barrow, WA6WQG, in Fresno on the 2-meter calling frequency (146.52 MHz, simplex). Wayne raised Barrows again and asked to have a ranger come and pick up Liz and take her to the end of the unpaved road up above, near where it joined Highway 180. The other cyclists would be waiting there.

Meanwhile, we speculated on what could be causing Liz's abdominal problems. What started out as a minor request bloomed into something much bigger. Barrows' wife ended up calling 911 and soon we were hearing about the possibilities of an ambulance being sent, and the need for a landing site for a helicopter. We were in a remote area, 10 or 12 miles from the nearest paved road. Also, it was difficult for the authorities to understand exactly where we were, even though we provided a forest road number and road name.

Liz said she didn't want an expensive emergency pickup, and she didn't seem to be in that bad a condition to us, either. We repeated many times that we wanted a forest ranger to come down and take Liz to the top end of the unpaved road. Finally, after many long minutes of airtime, that was arranged, but not before a helicopter flew over! Eventually, after a ranger drove her and her gear to the end of the dirt road and she rested, Liz recovered enough to ride with the group and finish the day's ride.

I'm happy to report that Liz recovered fast and fully, and was in fine form on the next day of riding. She finished the tour with the rest of us a week later, and she was also very impressed with the possibilities offered by ham radio and said she wanted to get her Tech license.

—Bill Paul KD6JUI  
P.O. Box 1275  
Belmont, CA 94002

415 345-7021 (Home)  
415 536-6493 (Work)

(The above is part of an article that appeared in the November '97 issue of Worldradio. This excerpt appears here with the permission of the author. —Ed.)

# LETTERS

## BMHA Has Tie-in With L.A.P.D. Bomb Squad!

Fellow members,

Just a quick note and photo to show you that I plug the BMHA along with ham radio every chance I get. For years I was a sergeant in the Bomb Squad of the Los Angeles Police Dept. Now retired, as a community service I present demonstrations and talks about the Bomb Squad to various groups.



Among the signs on the back door of my Bomb Squad robot/truck you'll see the BMHA logo prominently posted. In this photo I'm demonstrating the Bomb Squad's robot. He's our pal. In ticklish situations, he handles bombs for us.

At 72, I don't push my two-wheel as much anymore—local bike trips and daily Schwinn-Air-Dyne workouts keep me involved and smiling. In 1950 I was recalled to US Airforce duty in Europe as an OSI investigator. While there I did my longest bike trip when a Frankfurt detective and I biked nearly 1350 miles from Bremerhaven, Germany to Madrid, Spain. Other off-duty time in the Mid-East, Africa, and the Scandinavian countries gave me many happy bike miles.

Ham radio wasn't convenient on a bike in those days, but since the advent of hand-helds I'm never without an HT while pedaling.

I really enjoy our BMHA Newsletter—keep up the good work.

—William D. "Andy" Anderson, N6KAS  
1630 Oak St. andyphoto@aol.com  
Santa Monica CA 90405

We need more writings on travel by bike, especially where use of ham radio made the trip safer, easier, or just plain more fun. Make lots of notes and take lots of pix as you travel along. And then send the finished piece, or an outline—your choice—to: BMHA Editor, POB 4009, Boulder CO, 80306-4009 or to hartleyal@aol.com

# LETTERS

## Plans His Bike Tours From Internet Reports

Hartley,

I've just returned from a six weeks solo bike tour of Southwestern France. Staying at hotels and eating vegetarian foods purchased at stores, I spent an average \$50 a day and rode 50 miles a day for 36 consecutive days. I began by following the Tour de France route over the passes of the Pyrenees, including the Tormolet, then moved north to the Dordogne Valley and biked for days through the gorges of the many scenic rivers in this area, finally ending up in Auvergne.

This was my seventh tour of France, and I'm already planning to go back next year. Incidentally, provided you stay off the principal routes, biking in France is just about as good as ever and the courtesy and politeness of motorists remains incredible.

Last April I did a similar tour of Costa Rica and my report of it is on the Bicycle Touring Select web page at <http://webhotel.uni-c.dk/dcl/tourindx.htm>.

It's also on the Bicycle Touring web page <http://users.aol.com/btoursing/home.htm>, a new bike touring page from San Antonio. Your newsletter readers might also be interested in another great touring web page, Trento Bike Pages, <http://www-math.science.unitn.it/Bike/>. I used it last fall to plan a bike tour of Italy and was even able to make hotel reservations through their links.

Nowadays, I plan my bike itineraries from bike reports on the Internet. These pages are gold mines of info for bike touring outside the US, but Adventure Cycling won't mention them because it may distract readers from bicycling in the U.S. (and following Adventure Bicycling's route maps).

I did ride in Utah and Colorado last May-June but didn't get to Boulder—I usually hang out nowadays at Creeds or Salida. Anyway, I'll try as hard as possible to get up to Boulder next year. Hope you're both in top shape.

Best Wishes, Norman D. Ford, Kerrville TX.

E-mail: [blodwen@kfc.com](mailto:blodwen@kfc.com)

## About Norman Ford:

(Norman Ford is a very interesting guy, especially in regard to his approach to physical fitness and bicycle touring. The following biographical information I gleaned from Authors' Bio Service and from knowing Norman for many years. —Ed.)

Norm says:

"I'm 76, a native of Wales in the UK, been in the US since 1947, lived and biked in Boulder 1973 to 1985. I now live in the Texas Hill Country, which has some of the best year around road biking in the nation. A vegetarian since 1964, I use cross-training with hill walking, swimming, yoga and weight-lifting to augment bicycle fitness training."

A merchant marine radio operator in World War II, Ford can still read morse code at 25 w.p.m. But he has yet to become a radio ham.

Since he began bicycle touring at age 16 in 1937 Norman Ford has cycled through 37 foreign countries including all of Western Europe; Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Ecuador; New Zealand, Nepal, Vietnam and Bali plus a variety of island countries from Tahiti to the Bahamas and Bermuda.

(Norman usually rides alone, but on his tour of Guatemala there were seven riders—I was one of them. It was rugged. Later Norman and I were co-leaders of a tour of the Colorado Rockies. —Ed.)

A full-time freelance writer since 1951, Ford financed his many bike tours from royalties from the 60 books he has written over the years. "Where to Retire on a Small Income" was Ford's best known book, a million copy seller, while his more recent "The Healthiest Places to Live and Retire" sold 300,000 copies over the past two years.

Ford's books are about travel, retirement and health but he diverged into bicycling to write "Keep on Pedalling" (out of print) and "25 Bicycle Tours of the Texas Hill Country and West Texas (W. W. Norton).

## Membership Application

Member: [info@bicyclehams.org](mailto:info@bicyclehams.org) 817 97 fpc /newham fpc /E-mail /newHAM /NOHAM /news /Q's /lost /walc /new

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Individual \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ new member? \_\_\_\_\_ renewal? \_\_\_\_\_

(US or Canada)

Family \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Foreign \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(limit: two persons)

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Call \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ License Class \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Most miles bicycled in one day \_\_\_\_\_

## BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, as designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U.

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

# BMHA NEWSLETTER

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America  
PO Box 4009  
Boulder, CO 80306-4009

## First Class Mail

## COMMENTS

....Within the past year I secured my ham radio license, and have been looking for ways to use it to my advantage.

For some years I have been riding in the Hilly Hundred Weekend Ride in Bloomington, IN, and noted several riders using their radios on the route. Upon my return home I found a 1992 brochure from BMHA which explained a lot about those radios. I enclose a SASE. Please send complete information along with a sample copy of the newsletter.

---Jim Holler, KB9PGQ, Melbourne, FL  
*(Jim responded in return mail, and now is a new member of BMHA. --Ed.)*

....I started to ride to Council Bluffs, IA, last October, got 39 miles into the trip and stopped for the night. My back started hurting BAD. I used my 2-meter HT to get help to take me back home. Trip cancelled.

---Raymond Bishop, K0JFR, Andover, KS

....I have a new call sign, W9AE. It's a vanity call sign, which uses my 3 initials, my first choice. Also I have a new e-mail address: Wayne\_Estes@csg.mot.com. I got rid of Netcom months ago. I got tired of dialing for 30 minutes to get in, and then getting only 300 bytes-per-second of bandwidth.

I haven't done any bike-mobile operating lately--my wife and I have been too busy moving into a different house. The new QTH is on a semi-rural acre. I don't have much space for

big antennas because the lot is full of maple trees. Hopefully this year I can dust off the MFJ 9420 and do some 20m ssb operating. And I need to change the call sign and QTH on my bike-mobile QSL card.

---Wayne Estes, W9AE, Mundelein, IL

....Just a note to let you know that I was on RAGBRAI this year, which makes it 11 that I have ridden. Had a great time even with the hill, rain, heat, and humidity! Met Chris, KOPE, Bob, KD6KMX, and his daughter, along with many other hams. I rode with Team Megacycles, the "follow-on" group that Chris and I started about eight years ago. Am planning a self-contained ride in Wyoming. A seven-day ride with 5-6 hundred miles. All is going well here. Fully employed as a business analyst and drawing my IBM pension. It sure helps with the toys!

---Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, South Sioux City, NE

....Hi There! I've been enjoying the BMHA Newsletter for some time now. Every time I get one in the mail, I end up talking about it on the local repeaters. And, always, someone asks for more info. May I make about a dozen copies to hand out to interested folks?

---Elena Maya-Scott, KS4OX, Charlotte, NC  
*(Better still, we sent her 12 regular issues of the newsletter to hand out. If you know some good prospects, just let us know and we'll send a batch of newsletters for you to hand out. --Ed.)*